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15 March 1966

MEMORANDUM

France, NATO, and the US

Summary

Since he took office in 1958, De Gaulle has sought to alter the nature of the Atlantic alliance. He aims to reduce the dominant position of the US within the alliance and to gain for France and the other European members a greater ability to act independently of the US both in and out of the North Atlantic Treaty area. Because he holds that the "integrated" military structure which has grown up under the treaty is the principal vehicle for US domination, he has centered his attack on that structure. He has been unable, however, to gain the support of the other principal European members of the alliance, and has heretofore limited himself to a series of pronouncements and minor unilateral French withdrawals.

Within the last week he has announced a series of measures that will in effect break the last French ties with the alliance military structure, although not with the alliance itself. He has announced "conditions" which will make it impossible for the US and Canada to maintain their forces and bases in France. He has proclaimed his intention to withdraw all French forces from commitment to NATO and French officers from NATO commands. He has specified that French forces in Germany, too, will no longer have NATO associations but will, nevertheless, remain in Germany under other legal provisions.

De Gaulle's goal in these withdrawals has not been simply to cut French ties with NATO, but to set in process a chain of events which will alter the nature of the alliance. To this end, he has called for bilateral arrangements on continuing cooperation

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between French and other forces. He has also suggested that agreements for the use of French facilities in wartime could be worked out, and--possibly in hopes he could induce the US and Canada to talk--he has left open the time schedule for the withdrawal of their forces from France.

There appears little doubt that De Gaulle can and will carry out his announced unilateral actions. Legally, the US/Canadian forces and the NATO headquarters can be ousted from France a year after the pertinent treaty provisions are denounced. The withdrawal of French forces from NATO can be legally accomplished at any time. De Gaulle's domestic political opponents are unlikely to be able to stop him, and the extent of their opposition will be moderated by the differences that exist among them and by De Gaulle's announced intention to continue French participation in the North Atlantic Treaty. Whether or not he will be able to accomplish his larger purpose and replace the present organizational structure with a broad multilateral treaty and a series of bilateral operating agreements will depend, in large measure, on the firmness of US leadership. Most of the other European members have already demonstrated a reluctance to press France to the point of complete exclusion. Thus the US will be faced with the task of heading off bilateral arrangements which may seem innocuous and which may be beneficial to the country involved, but which will create piecemeal the kind of alliance France wants.

Background

1. De Gaulle's view of France's place in Europe and the world was manifest in the difficult demands he placed on his allies during World War II. Since his return to power in 1958, he has consistently held that changes in France, in Europe, and in the world balance of power demand changes in the structure and functioning of the alliance system which was created at a time when US strength was overwhelming. De Gaulle's devotion to French "independence" has world-wide ramifications, but in Europe it has taken as its principal goal the reduction of US influence.

2. De Gaulle sees the Atlantic alliance, and particularly the military organization which has been created under the North Atlantic Treaty, as the major vehicle for continued US influence in Europe. He

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equates the "integration" of that organization with "subordination" to the US because he feels that "integration" creates military dependence on the US which in turn creates political dependence. He undoubtedly views West Germany's reluctance to weaken the US military guarantee and devote itself fully to the France-German treaty as an example of how this works in practice.

3. Shortly after assuming power in 1958, De Gaulle proposed the establishment of a tripartite directorate for NATO composed of the US, the UK, and France. His objective was to enlarge the French role in the formulation of Western policy not only in the area of NATO responsibility but around the world. He hoped that by playing the role of "European" representative on the tripartite body, he could also reinforce French preeminence in Western Europe.

4. Unable to gain acceptance of this arrangement, he has concentrated on the unilateral withdrawal of French forces from the alliance and maintained a consistent opposition to alliance efforts to move toward increased integration. He has avoided any formal diplomatic presentation of his desires for alliance reform since the abortive 1958 venture because he realized how unfavorably this would be received. He has frequently indicated, however, what the nature of such a new relationship should be. In 1959, in his first official press conference as president of France, De Gaulle warned that cooperation, not integration, must become the cornerstone of the alliance. In 1960, he made clear that France must be "...sole mistress of her resources and her territory." In 1962, he said that greatly changed world conditions made changes necessary in a "certain military organization, NATO." In 1963, he noted that while the alliance was indispensable so long as a Soviet threat existed, an evolution was beginning in the Communist bloc which might one day obviate the present need for an alliance. In 1964, he said that Paris rejected all systems which kept France under the "hegemony of a certain country." In 1965, he specified that French "subordination" in NATO under the guise of integration must cease not later than 1969. In February 1966, he said that all foreign military elements in France must be under the jurisdiction of French authorities.

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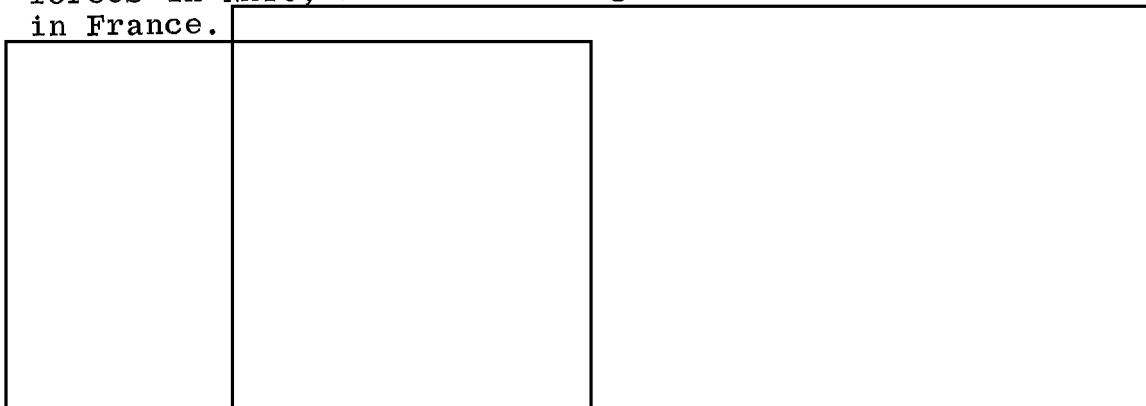
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5. At the same time, De Gaulle has taken a series of steps designed to free France of the integrated alliance structure and indirectly to weaken the structure itself. In 1959, he placed the French Mediterranean fleet under national command. In subsequent years, Paris excluded most of French territory from NATO's integrated air defense and refused to restore to NATO control three divisions removed from Europe for use in Algeria. France has withdrawn the bulk of its Atlantic fleet from NATO, and has withdrawn its representatives from NATO naval commands. Since 1965 Paris has refused to participate in any NATO exercises which did not conform to French strategic views.

6. In addition to the public warnings and the progressive disengagement of French troops, high French officials have privately indicated over the past year that a further major disengagement was coming and that it would affect not only French forces in NATO, but also foreign forces and bases in France.

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The Current Moves

7. The present French moves stand against this background of warnings and previous withdrawals. On 7 March De Gaulle sent a handwritten letter to President Johnson. Its essential features included a statement that France wished to remain a member of the North Atlantic Treaty, but that the organization which had grown up under the treaty was no longer justified. De Gaulle said that France therefore wished to cut its ties with that organization and to end the presence of foreign forces in France not under French command. The letter gave no indication when these moves would be begun or would have to be completed. Within the next two days similar handwritten

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letters were dispatched to Prime Minister Wilson, Chancellor Erhard, Prime Minister Pearson, and President Saragat. Each of these made essentially the same points, although each gave special attention to the particular interest of the recipient. The letter to Erhard, for instance, emphasized the French desire to maintain its forces in Germany although they would no longer be committed to NATO. Paris subsequently sent similar letters to the lesser alliance members.

8. On 12 March, France released to the public the text of an explanatory memorandum it had sent to all 14 other alliance members. This memorandum sought to justify the French action, and gave notice that French forces would be withdrawn from NATO commitment and that NATO headquarters would have to leave France. No time schedule for these withdrawals was mentioned, and France left the way open for discussions of "the necessary liaison which might have to be set up between the French command and the NATO commands."

9. In sections added to the version of the memorandum sent to the US and Canada, France also specified that it would reassume complete sovereignty over French territory and that it could no longer accept the thesis that "foreign units, installations or bases in France are answerable in any way to any other but the French authorities." France was described as willing to study "the practical consequences which arise from this" with the US and Canada, and to reach an agreement on US and Canadian use of French facilities "in case of a conflict in which both countries would participate." In a sentence added to the West German memorandum, France said it was also willing to discuss the facilities granted to German forces in France.

10. Allied reaction to the De Gaulle letters, the substance of which has been rather fully exchanged among the various capitals, has been guarded. Although there was considerable warning of the nature and timing of the move by De Gaulle, all of the other 14 NATO members agreed that the alliance should wait for De Gaulle to propose before reacting. The one joint move undertaken by the other 14 since the De Gaulle letters has been a meeting of the NATO permanent representatives in Paris on 11 March to formulate a joint public statement. This meeting, initiated by the UK and supported

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by the US, considered a UK-drafted statement. However, for a variety of national reasons, at least a half dozen of the participants were unable to accept the British draft. Rather than issue a statement that did not have at least nearly unanimous support, a further meeting was called for later this week, by which time the permanent representatives hope to have instructions which would allow them to accept a watered-down version of the British draft. Despite these difficulties and the fact that the Scandinavian countries, Portugal, and Canada have serious political problems with the British draft, the release by Paris of its memorandum may yet encourage the reluctant allies to react with a public statement of their own.

What is De Gaulle After?

11. In the most general sense, De Gaulle's current moves are aimed at demonstrating French independence on the world scene and weakening US influence (thereby raising French influence) in Europe.

12. These moves, however, are also related to more specific substantive goals. One of these is to alter the nature of the alliance. De Gaulle would like to replace the present alliance structure, which he feels ties France and Europe too closely to US initiatives unrelated to the treaty area, and which he feels is overly dominated by the US through its control of nuclear weapons and its economic might. By substituting a vague promise of common defense and a series of bilateral treaties negotiated by states stronger than they were in 1949 for an integrated structure dominated by its strongest member, De Gaulle feels he can both raise the European voice in the alliance and free the Europeans of automatic involvement in US policy moves.

13. De Gaulle nevertheless intends that France shall remain covered by the North Atlantic Treaty. He has clearly specified his intention to remain within the treaty even after 1969, when any member is free to withdraw unilaterally. He presumably still welcomes the mutual defense agreements of the treaty and feels it will be useful domestically to claim that only an organizational change has been accomplished without damage to the fundamental ties of the alliance. Unless bilateral agreements are worked out between France and NATO covering liaison between French and

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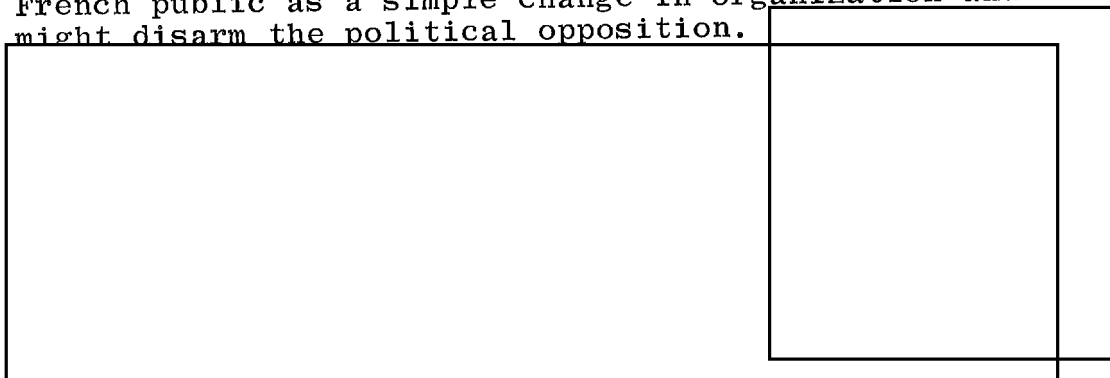
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NATO commands, however, France will be represented only on the North Atlantic Council and then not when military matters are discussed.

14. De Gaulle proposes in addition to maintain French forces in Germany. France has gone to some lengths to cite the legal justification for the retention of French forces in Germany even though these no longer will be committed to NATO. De Gaulle will be most reluctant to give up the status and power that derives from being one of the four nations which have rights and responsibilities deriving from the occupation of Germany.

Preferences on How His Goals Can be Reached

15. In addition to these substantive goals, De Gaulle has some rather clear preferences on how they might be reached. He would like to talk bilaterally about the withdrawal of US forces. Prior to the current exchange of letters, French diplomats sought assurances that the US had not completely foreclosed the possibility of bilateral negotiations. In none of the subsequent communications--public or private--has France specified the details of the withdrawal or indicated a timetable for them. In fact, the memorandum publicized on 12 March clearly called for negotiations on these "modalities." There are two major reasons for this. Most important, bilateral talks on the force withdrawal and the nature of the remaining ties would be a step toward the kind of alliance France prefers, and, if successful, would replace the present "integrated" structure with a bilateral structure. Moreover, bilateral talks could be depicted to the French public as a simple change in organization and might disarm the political opposition.



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16. De Gaulle would also like to talk bilaterally with other nations about new military arrangements.

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He already has specified to the Canadians and Germans that bilateral talks would now be appropriate. If the US refused to conduct any but the most necessary talks on such matters as the disposal of US property in France, De Gaulle would probably try to split the others from the US by offering them seemingly moderate terms for what to them may be valuable continuing agreements. Holding the alliance together under these circumstances would then become a major problem for the US.

17. De Gaulle would like to have achieved some practical results prior to his June visit to the Soviet Union. Already, of course, it seems likely that the French withdrawal from NATO will be well under way by June, and a deadline probably will have been set by France or agreed to by France and the US for the US withdrawal.

18. In any case, De Gaulle will seek to appear the offended party. In all of the publicity that has surrounded the French handling of the situation thus far, France has sought to portray its position as reasonable and that of the US as unreasonable. The essence of this public portrayal has been the line that France wants to negotiate but its partners do not. Background briefings stress a word or a nuance that appears to leave the way open for a reasonable settlement. Public statements are moderate, although there are judicious leaks to the press that France is firm in its intention to carry out its plans.

Can De Gaulle Achieve his Goals?

19. There appears to be no way of stopping De Gaulle from cutting France's ties with NATO, ending the presence of foreign troops in France not under French command, and retaining his forces in Germany under non-NATO legal provisions. It is doubtful, however, that he will be successful in his effort to make a fundamental alteration in the alliance. There are three basic restraints operating on him: the reaction of the domestic opposition, the response of his allies, and the legality of his actions.

20. The domestic opposition probably will make De Gaulle's action the subject of prolonged controversy, but this will be more a debate than a revolt.

De Gaulle has conditioned the French public over a period of years to expect the loosening of French ties with the alliance. More importantly, Frenchmen have been led to focus on and accept--at least partially--the idea that "NATO integration" does represent some form of American hegemony, that a diminished Soviet threat eliminates the need for a tightly integrated military system, and that "independence" is a worthwhile goal for France. Moreover, differences among opposition groups will lessen the impact of their challenge. It is clear from their initial responses that opposition leaders will approach the debate from their own ideological viewpoints and with their personal political goals in mind. Their argument that De Gaulle is risking nuclear disaster is weakened by the fact that De Gaulle has pledged to remain within the alliance.

21. France's allies can exert little restraint on De Gaulle in this initial series of moves, primarily because the moves can be made unilaterally and because their own self-interest in keeping France from withdrawing completely dictates moderation. Furthermore, unanimous action by 14 nations, each with its peculiar national political problems, will be difficult to achieve.

22. From the legal standpoint, De Gaulle has grounds to carry out his announced plans. There are five basic bilateral agreements covering US forces in France: the Line of Communications Agreement (LOC), the Air Base Agreement, the Pipeline Agreement, the Chateauroux Agreement, and the Headquarters EUCOM Agreement. These treaties presumably would no longer apply at the same time that France legally ceases to be a party to the North Atlantic Treaty. Since De Gaulle has made clear that France will continue to adhere to the treaty, however, at least for the present, the only way that four of the five agreements can be legally terminated is by mutual consent of the concerned parties. The fifth agreement, the LOC, can be denounced if agreement on modification is not reached, a procedure which takes a total of two years.

23. Apart from the North Atlantic Treaty itself, the three other major multilateral agreements are the NATO Status of Forces Agreement governing the personnel of the allied armed forces, the Ottawa Agreement

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covering the international staffs and member states' representatives, and the Protocol on the Status of Military Headquarters governing the rights of military personnel assigned to NATO international military headquarters or organizations. All three of these agreements can be terminated one year after notice of denunciation.

24. The three multilateral agreements are required for effective protection of personnel assigned to NATO headquarters and US personnel, so that their termination would impose unacceptable administrative restrictions on the operation of those headquarters and facilities, and probably force their withdrawal unless new agreements can be consummated. Denunciation of these agreements appears to be the legal road which De Gaulle will use to undermine agreements which have a longer life span.

25. To alter the nature of the alliance itself, however, De Gaulle must gain the cooperation of at least his major alliance partners. The chief obstacle in De Gaulle's path here is the clear determination of the US to carry on a NATO without France if necessary. At this point, the US appears to have broad support for this principle, although the allies have encountered difficulties in devising specific tactics. The US will face a constant battle, however, to uphold the principle of integration against French pressure on various NATO members to conclude bilateral agreements. This is a tactic which France has already pursued, as evidenced by its attempt to get the Italians to sign a bilateral agreement on naval cooperation, and one which might be difficult to resist in the future in view of the separate self-interests of the various states.

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